

NY Reps. Recommend Reappointment of 9/11 Health Czar

Monday, 23 February 2009

New York, NY – Today, Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes, 9/11 responders, lower Manhattan residents and others gathered near Ground Zero to encourage President Obama to reappoint Dr. John Howard as the federal government's 9/11 Health Coordinator. Maloney, Nadler, and 12 of their House colleagues sent a letter (a full copy of which follows) to the president today recommending Dr. Howard for the post.

Dr. Howard, the former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), was put in charge of federal 9/11 health programs in February 2006 by Michael Leavitt, then Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In July 2008, Dr. Howard was let go from his posts as NIOSH Director and 9/11 Health Coordinator with little explanation and despite widespread praise of his job performance.

"The Bush administration made a good decision in appointing Dr. Howard and a typically bad move in letting him go. In fact, I think he was dismissed in large part because he was making a strong effort to care for people with 9/11-related ailments," said Rep. Maloney. "We hope to pass comprehensive 9/11 health legislation this year with President Obama's support, but in the meantime we need someone to take charge of 9/11 health issues and ensure that proper care is given to those in need. I can't think of a better person for the job than Dr. Howard, who built the federal government's 9/11 health programs from the ground up. He is trusted on both sides of the aisle and would be an outstanding addition to President Obama's team."

"There is still much work to be done in coordinating and administering health care for 9/11 first responders, workers, residents, students and others," said Rep. Nadler. "Dr. John Howard has demonstrated expertise and skill in overseeing 9/11 health efforts and there was never any justifiable reason for removing him from his post. I wholeheartedly recommend re-hiring Dr. Howard for the job. Meanwhile, let's pass the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act so that we can provide critical health care and resources for those now sick because of 9/11."

"We owe the heroes of September 11th the best we have to offer," said Hughes, "and when it comes to protecting their health and well-being, those heroes have no greater champion than Dr. Howard. We respectfully call upon President Obama to reappoint Dr. Howard, whose experience, knowledge and intellect, coupled with his ability to work with both political parties, makes him the ideal choice to lead this most important initiative."

Earlier this month, Maloney, Nadler and their colleagues in the New York congressional delegation reintroduced H.R. 847, the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, which would provide critical health care and compensation for those sickened or injured in the aftermath of 9/11. While the Members of Congress hope to pass the bill this year, leadership is still needed in Washington to make sure that current federal 9/11 health programs continue to provide care to ailing 9/11 first responders, lower Manhattan residents, workers, students and others.

Background

In July 2008, the Bush Administration informed Dr. Howard that he would not be reappointed to a second term as NIOSH Director, despite praise from industry and labor leaders regarding Dr. Howard's service protecting American workers.

In February 2006, the New York congressional delegation successfully convinced the Bush Administration to appoint Dr. Howard to serve as the federal government's 9/11 Health Coordinator ([Click here for a copy of HHS's letter announcing Dr. Howard's appointment](#)).

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February 23, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama

President of the United States of America

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to strongly recommend that Dr. John Howard be chosen to run the World Trade Center Health Programs, which operate within the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

From February 2006 through August 2008, Dr. Howard was the Coordinator of the World Trade Center Health Programs, while he was also the Director of NIOSH. In his role as coordinator, Dr. Howard built from the ground up the federally-funded WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment programs that initially served WTC responders in the New York-area, but later expanded to meet needs of responders around the country and community members who lived, worked, or went to school in lower Manhattan in the aftermath of 9/11.

Dr. Howard has received accolades for his outstanding work on behalf of the heroes of 9/11, gaining universal praise from labor, community groups, and health care providers alike. He has proven to be an outstanding public servant who never allows political ideology to trump helping those sick from 9/11. In fact, he was among the Bush appointees most trusted and respected by Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. He is the kind of administrator we need to help the heroes who helped the nation in our time of need.

Thank you for considering our recommendation.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY

JERROLD NADLER

PETER KING

NITA M. LOWEY

ELIOT L. ENGEL

MICHAEL E. McMAHON

STEVE ISRAEL

EDOLPHUS TOWNS

JOSEPH CROWLEY

GARY L. ACKERMAN

ANTHONY D. WEINER

YVETTE D. CLARKE

PAUL TONKO

JOSÉ SERRANO

Members of Congress